



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Thomas a Becket Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Tilshead
Salisbury
Wiltshire SP3 4RZ

Previous inspection grade: Satisfactory

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Date of inspection: 9 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 27 April 2011

School's unique reference number: 126416

Headteacher: Alison Trickey

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Thomas a Becket is smaller than the average size primary school with 63 children together with 7 in the nursery. They are arranged into four class groups. It is in a rural setting. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage. There are a growing number of children from military families. The number of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number entitled to receive pupil premium. Overall attendance is in line with the national average. A pre-school class was started in October 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Thomas a Becket as a Church of England school are good

- Children understand that values have roots in Bible teaching and that they make a difference to their lives and relationships.
- A greater emphasis on Christian values in collective worship has made them more central to the promotion of the school's Christian ethos.
- The headteacher's commitment to the Christian ethos has ensured that it has moved forward since the previous inspection.

Areas to improve

- Develop the children's understanding of the links between the school's five core characteristics and explicit Christian values.
- Improve the quality of opportunities for children to explore their growing spiritual awareness by developing their skills to ask questions of meaning and purpose and use reflection journals to capture their thoughts.
- Improve standards in religious education (RE) by identifying opportunities to connect their learning with the school's Christian ethos and values to deepen their understanding of religious concepts.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

The Christian ethos is embedded in the life of the school by the everyday application of Christian values explicitly taught through Bible stories in acts of worship. These values, such as kindness, forgiveness and trust, are used to support five core characteristics that impact on the children's wellbeing and learning. These characteristics are confidence, achievement, responsibility, respect and creativity and children are make links between these and Christian values. For example, they explain how placing trust in someone involves responsibility and respect. Children can explain how Bible stories such as the good Samaritan teach values such as kindness, generosity and friendship. They are less certain about how Christian teaching specifically connects with the five core characteristics. Christian values therefore have a good impact on the children's understanding of relationships and behaviour and contributes to their growing moral and social development. Values are implicit in the Golden Rules and approach to behaviour management. Children have a clear understanding of right from wrong and the need to respect others regardless of background. There is less obvious impact of Christian values the children's learning through characteristics such as achievement. Children learn well and data suggests that they make at least expected progress in their learning. Opportunities for children to explore their personal spirituality have improved. Following discussions, members of staff have a clearer understanding of what spirituality means and are providing greater opportunities for children to engage in activities that develop their spirituality. A good example is the exploration of the meaning of pilgrimage and the introduction of times for children to be still and reflect. This is still at an early stage and children have not yet fully acquired the skills to enable them to think in depth about difficult concepts. Reflective areas in each classroom are well used by children to record their thoughts and they respond to them sometimes with prayer. At their best, these areas are interactive and allow children to explore their ideas across a wide range of subject but this approach is not consistent across the school. Children show a high degree of concern for others and the needs of those less fortunate than themselves.

The impact of collective worship is good

Planning for collective worship has improved since the previous inspection. There is a clearer focus on explicit Christian values with themes being explored each half term. Links between themes and the children's personal and social education provide further opportunities for the impact of values to be explored in greater detail outside of collective worship itself. Records of children's thoughts from reflection journals show that they are developing the ability to reflect on worship messages and apply them to their own lives both in and out of school. The potential for these journals to help children explore in depth has not yet been fully realised. Acts of worship are distinct times in the school day and include elements which make them explicit occasions to worship God. They regularly include Bible teaching, prayer, song and time for reflection. Children are aware of these elements but do not always understand their significance. For example, younger children know that the candle represents Jesus as light of the world but are not sure what that means. Children have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer and appreciate that it can support people in different ways. Younger children know that prayer can be used to say thank you and to ask for help for others. Older children explain that prayer is a way of connecting to God as Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They confidently talk about their perception of the Holy Spirit in an open way. They say that His is the 'voice you hear in your head' that 'makes you do the good stuff'. Children have some opportunities to be involved in planning and leading acts of worship but don't do so on a regular basis. They say that they enjoy those times when they actively take part in delivering worship and enjoy the times when they can share their thoughts and ideas. Children regularly contribute to evaluation of worship through the reflection diaries and governors have carried out some monitoring of collective worship. The weekly celebration of worship in the nearby local church is an important part of the worship life of the school. Children regard the church as an integral part of the school which helps them to feel comfortable in the building and appreciate that it is a place of worship for both them and the local community.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

The quality of religious education (RE) has been improved with the introduction of the Discovery RE scheme to support delivery of the Wiltshire syllabus. There is a greater emphasis on enquiry with more opportunities for children to be engaged in their learning. At its best, teaching challenges children's perceptions and understanding and encourages them to make links between what they are learning and their own experiences so that learning has more meaning for them. For example, older children became more engaged in their lesson when they were asked whether it is selfless to give up something that you don't need. These opportunities to explore links between what the children are learning and their own lives are sometimes missed and therefore children don't always make as much progress as they might. This is particularly the case when opportunities were missed to refer to the core Christian values. Overall, the quality of children's work is good. There is a good balance between acquiring knowledge and learning from it. They make good progress and achieve standards that are in line with national expectations. The headteacher is the RE leader and has been working with staff to develop assessment so that it is in line with other core subjects in the curriculum. These have been used from April 2015 and are still being developed. Some moderation has begun to take place with local schools so that there is a more secure understanding of progress and attainment.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are good

The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the school's Christian character has developed since the previous inspection. Members of the school community say that there is a greater emphasis on a distinctive Christian ethos in which values are more clearly based on Christian teaching. They are particularly pleased that links with the parish church have developed and are now much closer. Children, and their parents, say that the church is welcoming to them and that they feel at ease and comfortable to be in church. This gives both adults and children a positive impression of the church and helps to build relationships between the two communities. The headteacher has a good grasp of the purpose of being a church school and what it needs to do to continue to improve. She has accurately evaluated the impact of the Christian ethos on the children's learning and personal development through secure systems to gather and evaluate evidence. Governors share her vision and are committed to the development of the school as a church school. There are a number of new foundation governors who have yet to attend training to develop their understanding of their role. The vicar has also worked hard with the school and church to forge closer links and is regarded by children and adults in school as an important part of the school community. Parents feel that the school provides good opportunities for their children to find out about faith and belief and to explore what they mean to them. They appreciate that the school encourages their children to respect all faiths and that its values apply to everyone regardless of background. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report June 2016 St Thomas a Becket CE VA Primary School Tilshead SP3 4RZ